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RELIGION AND GOVERNANCE IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD: A Comparative Study of Muslim Countries

Abstract

The relationship between politics and religion in Muslim countries has become a much debated and discussed issue among scholars of Islam and Muslim societies. A commonly stated view of many Western and Muslim scholars and activists is that Islam is not only a religion but also a blueprint for social order, and therefore encompasses all domains of life, including law and the state. It is then argued that this striking characteristic is what sets Muslim societies apart from Western counterparts that are based upon the separation of state and religion. After examining these and related issues, the paper reports empirical evidence, which shows that institutional configurations form an important factor in mediating and articulating the nature of the relationship between religion and politics in Muslim countries. Two types of configurations—undifferentiated and differentiated—are identified. Undifferentiated institutional configurations refer to social formations in which religion and the state are integrated. In contemporary discourse, such a formation is labeled as an Islamic state. In contrast, differentiated institutional configurations refer to social formations in which religion and politics—by constitutional requirement or by tradition—occupy separate spaces. The empirical evidence discussed in the paper indicates that, in general, the trust placed in religious institutions and consequently their public influence are greater in Muslim countries with differentiated institutional configurations than in those with undifferentiated ones. In general, trust in religious institutions is directly related to trust in political institutions. The paper offers some theoretical underpinnings for this and other findings, and argues that undifferentiated Muslim societies tend to take on the characteristics of differentiated societies over time. An Islamic state, therefore, might also provide a route to the social and political development of a Muslim society in which religion and politics coexist in an autonomous but mutually cooperative relationship.

Introduction

What types of political systems are compatible with Islam? Are Islam and democracy compatible? In general, the relationship between politics and religion in Muslim societies has become a focus of intense debate among scholars of Islam. A commonly stated view of many Western and Muslim scholars of Islam is that Islam is not only a religion but also a blueprint for social order, and therefore encompasses all domains of life, including law and the state (Maududi 1960; Lewis 1993; Huntington 1993a; Rahman 1982; Weber 1978; Gellner 1981). It is further argued that this characterization sets Islamic societies apart from Western ones, which are based upon the separation of state and religious institutions.

In reality, Muslims have experienced a wide range of governments including the Caliphate, monarchy, military dictatorship, dictatorship, communism, national socialism, theocracy, religious fascism, and democracy. This would suggest that, like other religious traditions, especially Christianity, Islam possesses intellectual and religious resources that could provide the foundation for a wide range of political systems. According to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, the democratic system prevalent in the West is not appropriate for the Middle East because the election system has no place in Islam. The Islamic creed calls for a government of advice and consultation, and holds the ruler fully responsible before the people. His views are widely supported by Islamists such as Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi and are echoed by fundamentalists who seek to impose an authoritarian Islamic government (Esposito 2004). However, Islamic scholar Khaled Abou El Fadl takes a different position, claiming that

democracy is an appropriate system for Islam because it both expresses the special worth of human beings—the status of vice regency—and at the same time deprives the state of any pretence of divinity by locating ultimate authority in the hands of people rather than the *ulema*. (Abou El Fadl 2004:36)

Other Muslim leaders take different reformist positions. Former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami has suggested that existing democratic systems do not follow one path. Just as democracy can lead to a liberal or socialist system, it can also accommodate the inclusion of religious norms in the government. He was obviously referring to the Iranian model (Esposito 2004). Former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid has suggested that Muslims have two choices: to pursue a traditional, static, and legal-formalistic Islam, or to follow a more dynamic, cosmopolitan, universal, and pluralistic Islam. He rejects the notion of an Islamic state, which he regards as a 'Middle Eastern tradition.' For Indonesia, he advocates a moderate, pluralistic, and tolerant Islam that treats Muslims and non-Muslims equally, and one that can form the basis of a state in which religion and politics are kept separate (Wahid 1983).

These differing views of prominent Islamic political and intellectual leaders further illustrate that the Islamic world might not offer an ideal functioning democracy, but neither does it offer an ideal functioning Islamic polity. Though their views differ, these views essentially reflect the political reality of the Muslim world, which encompasses a variety of 'functioning' political systems. Are these differences indicative of vastly different political attitudes? The most comprehensive and up-to-date empirical evidence suggests otherwise. A comparison of political values and attitudes shows remarkable similarities between Muslim and Western countries. For example, the approval rates posted for indicators of 'democratic performance' and 'democratic ideals,' and the disapproval rates posted for strong leaders are identical for Muslim and Western countries. There are, however, significant differences in rates posted for social values (approval of gender equality, homosexuality, abortion, and divorce). Another difference lies in the significantly greater disapproval rate posted for religious leaders in Western countries: 62%, as opposed to 39% in

Muslim countries. (For a description of the indicators and further details, see Norris and Inglehart 2003.)

While a comparison of political and social values in Muslim and Western countries could shed significant light on current debates concerning the Clash of Civilizations theory, as formulated by American political scientist Samuel Huntington, it does not provide many insights about how attitudes toward various institutions, in particular Islamic ones, vary in Muslim countries. This was one of the main foci of my research. I was particularly interested in exploring differences in attitudes toward key Islamic institutions and the sociological factors producing these differences. It is to this analysis I now turn. As mentioned earlier, a commonly stated view of many Western and Muslim scholars is that Islam encompasses all domains of life, including law and the state, and it is this characterization that sets Islamic societies apart from Western ones.

A number of scholars of Muslim societies, including American historians Ira Lapidus (1996) and Nikki Keddie (1994), have disputed this characterization of Muslim societies and have pointed out that, notwithstanding several examples of state control of religion in Western societies, these differences are commonly used to account for the different developmental trajectories of Western and Islamic societies. Western societies, with their separation of church and state, of civil and religious law, are said to have promoted an autonomous domain for secular culture and civil society, which together form the bases of modernity. In Islamic societies, the lack of differentiation between the secular and the sacred has inhibited such development (Weber 1978; Crone 1980; Lewis 1993; Huntington 1993a or 1993b).

After reviewing the evidence concerning the separation of state and religion in Islamic history, Lapidus (1996) concludes that the history of the Muslim world reveals two main institutional configurations. Characteristic of lineage or tribal societies, the undifferentiated state-religious configuration can be found in a small number of Middle Eastern societies. In contrast, the historical norm for agro-urban Islamic societies is an institutional configuration that recognizes the division between state and religious spheres.

Despite the common statement (and the Muslim ideal according to some) that the institutions of state and religion are unified, and that Islam is a total way of life that defines political as well as social and family matters, most Muslim societies did not conform to this ideal, but were built around separate institutions of state and religion (Lapidus 1996:24). Keddie (1994: 463) has described the supposed near-identity of religion and the state in Islam as “more a pious myth than reality for most of Islamic history.” Similar views of Islamic history have also been advanced by others (Zubaida 1989; Sadowski 1997; Ayubi 1991).

Relationship between State and Religion

The weight of historical scholarship indicates that the institutional configurations of Islamic societies can be classified into two types (Hassan 2002): (1) differentiated social formations (i.e., societies in which religion and state occupy different spaces), and (2) undifferentiated social formations (i.e., societies in which religion and state are integrated). While a majority of Islamic societies have been and are ‘differentiated social formations,’ a small but significant number of them have been and are ones that can be classified as ‘undifferentiated social formations.’ A label commonly used in contemporary discourse for undifferentiated Muslim social formations is the ‘Islamic state.’

Irrespective of the historical evidence, relations between the state and religion are an important issue in contemporary Muslim countries. Many Muslim countries are a product of the process of decolonization in this century, during which nationalist movements were spearheaded by relatively secular leaders. These new states have defined their identities in nationalist terms and, in many cases, have preserved secular legal, educational, and political institutions inherited from the colonial era. However, Islamic revival movements have emerged in many Muslim countries and, in general, they denounce the trend toward secularization, calling for the return to a state that represents and embodies Islam and enforces an Islamic way of life (Lapidus 1996; Beinun and Stork 1997; Esposito 1992; Marty and Appleby 1993).

Whereas in the past only Saudi Arabia defined itself as an Islamic state, now countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sudan have become or aspire to become Islamic states, and while all of them define themselves and function as Islamic states, they differ from one another in many significant ways. Algeria is currently enduring a bloody struggle for the establishment of an Islamic state. Similar trends appear to be occurring in predominantly Muslim regions of Nigeria. In Turkey, the power of the Kemalist secular state has come under muted challenge from the rise of Islamic parties as dominant political actors, as signified by the now ruling Justice and Development Party.

The relationship between religion and politics is influenced by the internal dynamics of Muslim societies. These dynamics are grounded in the relationship between the two traditions of Islam, namely, the ‘high Islam’ of the *ulema* and the ‘folk’ or ‘popular Islam’ of the masses. These two styles or traditions of Islam provide a built-in mechanism for self-rectification and purification, which periodically manifests in ‘differentiation’ and ‘de-differentiation’ between religion and politics in Muslim countries. The dynamics of the relationship between these two traditions offer the possibility for Muslim societies to move from one to the other (Gellner 1981, 1992; Rahman 1982; Beyer 1994; Hassan 1987, 2002).

Institutional Configurations and Trust in Religious Institutions

Although relations between the state and religious institutions represent a significant concern for the Islamic world, there has been no empirical study of the attitudes of Muslims toward different institutional configurations. The issue here is whether religious institutions enjoy more or less trust in the public mind in differentiated Muslim social formations (in which religion and the state are separate) than in undifferentiated Muslim social formations (in which religion and the state are closely integrated). Public trust in institutions of the state and civil society is an important symbol of the political legitimacy of the state and its agencies. Drawing from empirical evidence gathered as part of my multi-country study, we are now in a position to examine this issue by comparing data about the level of trust in the state and civil society institutions in different Muslim countries, and about the level of trust in undifferentiated and differentiated Muslim social formations.

The respondents in all seven countries were asked how much trust they had in key institutions of the state and civil society. The specific question that elicited this information was: "I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much you trust them to tell the truth and to do what is best for the country? Is it a great deal of trust, quite a lot of trust, not very much trust, or none at all; or do you not know?" Readers who are familiar with the World Values Survey will recognize that this is a modified version of the question posed there. The institutions about which the respondents' opinions were sought were the following:

- *Ulema*
- Parliament
- Press
- Universities
- *Imam masjid*
- Courts
- Television
- Schools
- *Pir / kyai*
- Civil service
- Major companies
- Intellectuals
- Political parties
- Armed forces

In Iran, the institutions of *ulema*, *pir*, and the armed forces were excluded from the main survey (number of respondents = 469), but they were included in an exploratory survey (number of respondents = 66).

Trust in Institutions

As mentioned earlier, relations between the state and religious institutions and communities are a central concern in the Islamic world. It is therefore rather surprising that, given the importance of this issue, there have been no systematic empirical investigations of the subject. In this respect, the findings reported here fill an important gap in our knowledge. The general issue examined was the level of trust in religious institutions and the institutions of civil society, in undifferentiated Muslim social formations (i.e., Islamic states) and in differentiated Muslim social formations.

For the computation of the trust scores from the data reported here, the two categories of 'a great deal of trust' and 'quite a lot of trust' were combined to arrive at a composite index of trust. The findings of the survey data are reported in Table 1. They show wide variations as well as similarities among respondents in the seven countries in terms of their trust in core institutions of religion and the state. Kazakhstan stands out as a country whose Muslims universally have very low confidence in key institutions of society. This is most likely a function of the dramatic changes that have occurred in Kazakhstan over the past decade. The impression gathered during the fieldwork in the late 1990s was that most people were disoriented by the economic and social changes that followed the collapse of the former Soviet Union. These changes reduced the total worth of Kazakhstan's GDP by half, thus adversely affecting the lives of ordinary citizens (UNDP 1996).

Many Kazakhs were disillusioned and very apprehensive about the future, and the data reflects this view. In relative terms, roughly three out of ten respondents trusted the armed forces, the press, television, universities, and intellectuals. However, the religious institutions of the *ulema*, *imam masjid*, and *pir* enjoyed much more trust than the key institutions of the state. This is rather surprising, given that most Kazakhs were not actively involved in religion during the Soviet era. Kazakhstan would need to be considered a special case. The other six countries can be compared with greater confidence.

Indonesia, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, unlike Kazakhstan, are large, predominantly Muslim countries that have been ruled by the indigenous ruling classes for at least half a century. Malaysia is closer to Kazakhstan demographically in terms of size and composition. However, the Malays, unlike the Kazakhs, are well-known for their devotion to Islam. Key state institutions—namely, parliament, the courts, the civil service, and political parties—enjoyed moderate to low levels of trust in the public mind. Political parties were held in especially low public esteem in Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Turkey. Levels of trust in state institutions were lowest in Kazakhstan and Iran, and highest in Malaysia. The armed forces were trusted by a considerable majority of the respondents in all countries except Iran and Kazakhstan. In Malaysia, Pakistan, and Egypt, the armed forces enjoyed comparatively higher levels of trust and were among the most trusted institutions in the public mind.

Table 1: Trust in Key Institutions in Selected Muslim Societies (In %)

Institution	Pakistan	Indonesia	Egypt	Kazakhstan	Iran	Turkey	Malaysia
<i>Ulema</i>	48	96	90	24	7*	28	95
<i>Imam masjid</i>	44	94	83	22	36	26	94
<i>Pir / kyai / ustaz</i>	21	91	52	21	8*	18	91
Political parties	12	35	28	12	10	3	44
Parliament	22	53	34	19	32	11	69
Courts	55	55	76	16	28	37	73
Civil service	26	58	44	11	23	22	61
Armed forces	82	68	78	33	29	68	85
Press	38	84	54	33	24	4	68
Television	31	80	49	37	30	9	72
Major companies	29	42	45	14	16	27	46
Schools	71	92	68	48	46	57	87
Universities	60	88	70	33	44	58	83
Intellectuals	66	92	81	37	59	67	91

* These percentages are from a subsample of 66 respondents.

The most striking differences between the countries, however, relate to trust in Islamic institutions. In Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt, the *ulema* and the *imam masjid* were the most trusted institutions of civil society. The institutions of *pir*, *kyai* and *ustaz* (religious experts) were very highly trusted in Malaysia and Indonesia, and moderately in Egypt. In Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey, and Iran, the level of trust in religious institutions was low. The main survey in Iran ascertained only the level of trust in *imam masjid*, and it was found to be the lowest among the countries surveyed. In Iran, a smaller preliminary survey (number of respondents = 66) did include the questions about trust in *ulema* and *pir*, and the findings revealed a very low level of trust in these institutions. The preliminary survey surveyed mainly middle- and upper-middle-class respondents from Tehran. However, for proper comparison, only the data pertaining to *imam masjid* should be considered as comparable. The institutions of *pir*, *kyai* and *ustaz* were very highly trusted in Malaysia and Indonesia. In general, less than half of the respondents trusted religious institutions in Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, and Turkey. In contrast, a large majority in the other three countries trusted these institutions.

Three other institutions that were trusted by a significant majority of the respondents in Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan were intellectuals, universities, and schools. The level of trust in these three institutions was particularly high in Indonesia and Malaysia. Mass media institutions did well in winning public trust in Indonesia and Malaysia; moderately in Egypt, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Iran; but abysmally in Turkey. Perhaps the most surprising result reported in Table 1 is the low levels of trust in religious institutions in Iran and Pakistan. These are the only countries in the study that can be categorized as undifferentiated societies (i.e., Islamic states). These findings were counterintuitive. The patterns discerned in the differentiated societies were mixed. Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt displayed very high levels of trust, but that was not the case in Turkey and Kazakhstan. For reasons mentioned earlier, Kazakhstan can be regarded as a special case. This leaves Turkey as the only differentiated society with low public esteem in religious institutions. However, this does not mean that religious institutions there do not enjoy public trust and influence. The success of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey during the last election clearly suggests that they do. The evidence reported in Table 1 and the recent political developments in Turkey themselves allow us to come to a cautious conclusion that religious institutions enjoy a higher level of public trust and influence in differentiated Muslim social formations.

These findings are interesting because this is the first time such an empirical study has been carried out in seven Muslim communities in different regions of the world, and in different social formations. Intuitively, one would expect that, since Iran and Pakistan are the only undifferentiated (Islamic) states among the seven countries under study, the level of trust in religious institutions should be relatively high. The results are the *exact opposite*. It is also worth mentioning that one does not hear that religious institutions are held in such high esteem in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt. In relative terms, even the trust shown in religious institutions in Kazakhstan as compared with state institutions was surprising. In view of the evidence reported above, we can say that the faith lines in contemporary Indonesian, Malaysian, and Egyptian societies are very clearly delineated. Based on the survey, state institutions were held in low to moderate esteem, and religious institutions were held in the highest esteem. In Iran and Pakistan, both state and religious institutions were held in low esteem, and a similar pattern prevailed in Kazakhstan. The pattern in Turkey was more complex. With the exception of the courts, institutions of the state were held in low public esteem. Religious institutions enjoyed more consistent levels of public trust. While the level reported in the study was relatively low, the victory scored by the Justice and Development Party during the last Turkish election would suggest that religion does enjoy a significant level of trust among the Turks.

Are these differences an artifact of the statistics or survey methodology? Indirect confirmation of the level of trust in religious institutions was provided by the findings of a 1996 Gallup Pakistan survey on Important Social Issues. A randomly selected sample of 821 urban respondents was asked how much they trusted the following institutions: the military, religious scholars, industries, the courts, newspapers, parliament, politicians, government officials, and the police. The results

were: the military 78%, religious scholars 44%, industries 38%, the courts 34%, newspapers 29%, parliament 21%, politicians 19%, government officials 17%, and the police 10% (Gallup Pakistan 1996). The results of the Gallup survey are remarkably similar to the results of the study presented here, and provide an external validation of the findings reported here as they relate to Pakistan.

Is Trust in Religious Institutions linked to Trust in Political Ones?

In this study, we were also able to examine the relationship between the level of trust in religious institutions and that in key institutions of the state. It was hypothesized that: the relationship between the level of trust in religious institutions and the level of trust in key institutions of the state would be stronger in an undifferentiated Muslim social formation than in a differentiated one.

In order to test this hypothesis, the average percentage of respondents expressing trust in each of the four institutions of the state (namely, parliament, political parties, the civil service, and the courts) was calculated separately for respondents expressing a lot of trust, not very much trust, or no trust in the three religious institutions (namely, *ulema*, *imam masjid*, and *pir / keyai / ustaz*). The category ‘a lot of trust’ includes the responses, ‘a great deal of trust’ and ‘quite a lot of trust,’ while the ‘not very much trust’ and ‘no trust’ categories represent those responses alone. The percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who indicated that they had ‘a great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of trust in institutions of the state. In Iran, the main survey did not include questions about trust in *ulema* and *pir*, so the level of trust in religious institutions is based solely on the data pertaining to trust in *imam masjid*. The findings of these calculations are reported in Table 2. These findings show that an increase in trust in religious institutions is associated with increased trust in institutions of the state in all countries. Another notable trend indicated by the data is that the average percentage of respondents who trusted religious and key state institutions was significantly lower in Kazakhstan and Turkey than in Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, and Indonesia.

Table 2: Level of Trust in Key Institutions of the State By level of trust in religious institutions (In %)

	A Lot of Trust	Some Trust	No Trust
Egypt	54	46	27
Indonesia	61	25	56
Pakistan	40	29	20
Kazakhstan	33	19	7
Iran*	47	14	9
Turkey	24	18	15
Malaysia	73	52	30

* For the Iranian sample, the term ‘religious institutions’ refers only to *imam masjid*.

Based on the examination of the evidence reported above, we can now conclude that: (1) the differences in the levels of trust in the surveyed countries were most likely produced by political and social dynamics, and not by cultural dynamics or methodological biases; and low levels of trust in religious institutions in society negatively affected the level of trust in state institutions.

Further attempts were made to ascertain the relationship between institutional configurations of the state and attitudes toward the role of religious institutions in society. To achieve this, all respondents in Turkey, Iran, and Malaysia were asked the following:

There is much debate these days about the appropriate role that religious institutions should play in a modern society. Please indicate which *one* of the following statements comes closest to expressing your opinion.

- A. Religious instructions should focus on religious affairs only.
- B. Religious institutions should be involved in political matters whenever it is necessary.
- C. Religious institutions should play an important role in the government.

The countries were selected on the basis of their contrasting or different institutional configurations. Turkey was selected because it is the most secular country; strict separation between religion and the state is enshrined in its constitution. Iran was selected because, under its constitution, it is an Islamic state, and the state is expressly required to govern the country according to Islamic law. This fusion of politics and religion is also enshrined in its constitution. Malaysia has different institutional configurations from Turkey and Iran. It is a constitutional monarchy and, although religion and state are theoretically separate, Islam is the official religion of the state. The role of Islam has been increasing gradually in political and public affairs. In some states (provinces) of Malaysia, Islamic party PAS wields significant political influence; in the state of Kelantan, it is the ruling party. It was also the ruling party in the state of Trengganu until it lost power few years ago.

The evidence reported in Table 3 shows striking differences in the attitudes of Turkish, Iranian, and Malaysian respondents. In strictly secular Turkey, 74% of respondents said religious institutions should focus on religious affairs. Only 11% favored religious institutions playing an important role in the government; another 14% favored an interventionist role for religious institutions when necessary. Respondents from the Islamic Republic of Iran saw the role of religious institutions differently. Unlike the Turkish Muslims, only 5% of Iranians were in favor of religious institutions confining their role to religious affairs only. Of those surveyed, 43% favored religion playing an important role in society; 52% favored involvement of religious institutions in politics whenever necessary. The outcome of the 2005 Iranian presidential election is consistent with this evidence.

Table 3: "What Is the Role of the Religious Institution?" Agreement by country, sex, age group, and education level (In %)

Demographic Variable	Iran			Malaysia			Turkey		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
All respondents	5	52	43	14	18	66	74	14	11
Gender									
Male	6	46	48	14	18	68	70	16	14
Female	5	59	37	14	19	67	80	13	8
Age									
Under 26	6	53	41	11	20	69	74	15	12
26-40	6	52	43	13	20	67	78	15	7
41-55	2	46	52	18	17	66	69	15	15
Over 56	8	58	33	24	18	59	74	5	21
Education									
Less than high school	7	58	36	18	17	65	70	14	16
High school	6	48	46	12	18	70	73	16	11
University or professional education	5	57	38	12	21	68	83	13	3

A = Religious institutions should focus on religious affairs only.

B = Religious institutions should be involved in political matters whenever it is necessary.

C = Religious institutions should play an important role in the government.

The results for Malaysia were different from those for Turkey and Iran. The pattern was almost the direct opposite of that seen in Turkey. Two-thirds of Malaysians were in favor of religion (i.e., Islam) playing an important role in government; the remaining respondents were divided roughly equally between the other two stated roles for religious institutions. These results clearly show that different institutional configurations have an impact on public attitudes. Most Muslim countries in the world are probably closer to the Malaysian state in their institutional configurations. And if Malaysian attitudes are an indicator of public attitudes, then we should expect vigorous support for a more interventionist role for religion in governmental affairs. A state that wishes to confine the role of Islam to religious affairs only might have to frame constitutions similar to Turkey's and have the political will to ensure that constitutional provisions about the role of religion are strictly enforced.

The analyses of survey data by gender, age, and educational level reveal some interesting patterns. In Iran and Turkey, men were more inclined than women to say that religious institutions should play an important role in government. In Turkey, women were more in favor of the role of religion being restricted to religious affairs. In Malaysia, there was no similar correlation between gender and attitudes toward the role of religion. Interestingly, in Malaysia and Iran, younger respondents were more inclined to favor an active role for religion in government whereas, in Turkey,

it was the older respondents who expressed this view. The more educated in Turkey were less likely to favor active involvement of religion in government, and they were also more likely to be in favor of confining the role of religious institutions to religious affairs. In Malaysia, education had little effect on attitudes; the majority of respondents across all education levels were in favor of religion playing an important role in government. Education levels did not markedly influence the attitude patterns of Iranian respondents, although the more educated and the least educated respondents were more likely to favor involvement of religion in political affairs when necessary, and those with high school education and some of those with college education favored an active role for religion in government. While gender, age, and education did produce some differences in attitudes, it is worth noting that the overall pattern did not alter significantly.

Discussion

What could be a possible explanation of these findings and what are their sociological implications? An explanatory hypothesis could be constructed in the following way. Given that, in all of the societies under study, there is a relatively low level of trust in key state institutions, we could hypothesize that a dialectical process is created by the social and political conditions within which key state institutions enjoy only low levels of esteem—and consequently political legitimacy—among citizens.

The main business of the state is to govern and manage the affairs of society in a fair and unbiased manner. When the state or its key institutions lack social/political legitimacy in the public mind, the state must use varying degrees of coercion to ensure compliance. Such an approach, the citizens will inevitably resist, which in turn produces a more authoritarian state response. This generates further resistance, and so a cycle of authoritarian response and resistance develops. The state ultimately comes to be seen as authoritarian, oppressive, and unfair, and this leads to political mobilization against the state. The institutions of civil society that act as the mobilizer of this resistance gain public trust, and consequently come to enjoy high levels of esteem and legitimacy among the public.

This model could explain the high level of trust in religious as well as other institutions of civil society—such as schools, universities, and public intellectuals—in Indonesia and Egypt. Since both these societies are examples of what we have called differentiated Muslim social formations, religious institutions play a vital public role in the mobilization of resistance to the state, thereby increasing the esteem with which they are held in the public mind. Universities, schools, and public intellectuals are also held in high esteem for the same reason. In Pakistan and Iran, however, the situation is different. Pakistan and Iran, as we have argued, are undifferentiated social formations in which religious institutions are integrated into the state structures. The erosion of trust in state institutions, therefore, also corrodes trust in religious institutions that are perceived as part of the state. Schools, intellectuals, and universities are probably trusted because of their role as mobilizers of resistance against a state perceived as weak, ineffectual, and authoritarian. The

low level of trust in religious institutions in Pakistan and Iran further reduces the trust in state institutions. In the case of Kazakhstan, the disintegration of the former Soviet Union has resulted in unparalleled political, social, and economic insecurity, and the low level of trust in all institutions is probably indicative of that insecurity, but again, the logic behind the model applied in the case of Indonesia, Egypt, Iran, and Pakistan can also be applied to Kazakhstan.

The high level of trust in the armed forces could be a function of the underlying dynamics of the proposed model. The state's lack of legitimacy might create or aggravate an underlying sense of insecurity among the people. It might be that this sense of insecurity produces a positive perception of the armed forces that helps compensate for the perceived sense of insecurity. In Pakistan, the very high level of trust in the armed forces could also stem from public perceptions of a military and political threat from India, which the Pakistan government promotes as a matter of public policy to justify its huge allocations of public revenues to the armed forces.

An alternative explanation of the findings can also be constructed by applying the late German sociologist Niklas Luhmann's typology of the role of religion in modern society. According to Luhmann (1977, 1982), institutional differentiation and functional specialization form a distinctive feature of modern society. They give rise to autonomous 'functional instrumentalities' such as polity, law, economy, science, education, health, art, family, and religion. One consequence of the increased institutional autonomy in modern societies is that major institutions become independent of religious norms and values, a process that Luhmann calls 'secularization.' In such conditions, the degree of public influence that religion enjoys depends on how it relates to other social systems in society. Luhmann uses the terms 'function' and 'performance' to analyze this relationship.

'Function' in this context refers to 'pure' religious communication, variously called devotion and worship, the care of souls, the search for salvation, and enlightenment. 'Function' is the pure, social communication involving the transcendent and the aspect that religious institutions claim for themselves on the basis of their autonomy in modern society. Religious 'performance,' in contrast, occurs when religion is 'applied' to problems generated in other institutional systems but not solved there or simply not addressed anywhere else, such as economic poverty, corruption, political oppression, etc. Religious institutions gain public influence through the 'performance' role by addressing these non-religious or 'profane' problems. The functional problem of religion in modern society is a performance problem.

Religious institutions gain public influence when they efficiently carry out their performance role. This requires religious institutions to be autonomous vis-à-vis the state and other institutional subsystems. A logical deduction from this premise is that religious institutions will gain greater public influence in institutional configurations in which they are autonomous from the state. If they are not, then they cannot carry out their performance function effectively. This model is articulated in Table 4. In the context of the study presented here, this means that

religious institutions will enjoy, at least theoretically, greater public influence in a differentiated social formation than in an undifferentiated state social formation. The findings of this study would appear to support Luhmann’s analysis.

Table 4: Differentiated vs. Undifferentiated Social Formations by functional vs. performance roles

Role of Religion	Undifferentiated Social Formation	Differentiated Social Formation
Functional role	High	Low
Performance role	Low	High

Viewed from these perspectives, the findings might have important implications for the institutional configuration of the state in Muslim countries. An Islamic state that lacks trust—and consequently political legitimacy—in the public mind might in fact cause an erosion of trust in Islamic institutions, thereby further weakening the fabric of civil society. For the religious elite in Muslim countries, the message conveyed by these findings is that an Islamic state might not always be in the best interests of Islamic institutions and the religious elite. To promote a constructive socio-cultural, moral, and religious role for religious institutions within a Muslim society, it might be prudent to keep faith lines separate from the state, and thereby prevent them from becoming the fault lines of the political terrain.

These findings also have implications for the ruling elite, particularly in differentiated Muslim societies. As we have noted, the findings show a feedback effect. The level of trust in religious institutions is directly related to the level of trust in institutions of the state (see Table 2). This means that attempts to disestablish Islam could have adverse consequences for the level of trust in the state and for the legitimacy of the state itself. The implication for the international community is that if an Islamic state (i.e., an undifferentiated Muslim social formation) were to come into existence through democratic and constitutional means, support for such a state could in the long run pave the way for the development of a kind of differentiated Muslim social formation.

As in the case of Pakistan and Iran, the Islamic elite might need to make some compromises with the state over time to ensure a stronger socio-cultural, moral, and political role for religion in the society at large. We could call this a type of ‘secularization’ of religion that manifests itself in calls to limit the political role of religion.

In summary, the findings reported in this paper show that the integration of religion and the state in Muslim countries might not always be in the best interests of Islamic institutions and the religious elite, because when a state fails to inspire trust in its citizens, public trust in religious institutions is also eroded. This could have serious social, cultural, political, and religious implications. For example, if the public lacks trust in the institutions of the *ulema* and *imam masjid*, this could significantly undermine the economic and social well-being of these institutions, and lead them

to create circumstances or support demands that might not be conducive to the profession and promotion of the universality. (Here one can speculate about the influence of the *madrassa* (religious schools) in Pakistan on the rise of the Taliban political and religious movement in neighboring Afghanistan. If this hypothesis is accurate, one inference seems to be that religious institutions within a Muslim society continue to play a constructive social, cultural, and religious role when religion is kept separate from the state, and when these institutions enjoy an appropriate place in the institutional configurations of the society. It might be prudent, therefore, to keep faith separate from the state.

Because of the feedback effect related to the level of trust in religious institutions that has been noted earlier, the findings of this paper might also have implications for the relationship between the state and religion in Muslim countries. As the level of trust in religious institutions is related directly to the level of trust in institutions of the state, it follows that attempts to destabilize Islam might have adverse consequences for the level of trust in the state and for the legitimacy of the state itself. It has also been argued that the undifferentiated Muslim social formation tends to evolve over time toward a kind of differentiated Muslim social formation. An Islamic state, therefore, might also provide a route to the social and political development of Muslim societies in which religion and state coexist in an autonomous but mutually cooperative relationship.

There is, of course, the logical possibility of a Muslim society that is characterized by high levels of trust in and esteem for the state, and in which there is also a high level of trust in religious institutions. However, as far as we know, there are no contemporary examples of such a situation that can be readily identified. This raises the interesting question of why this is so. Does it mean that such a situation is not possible, or could such a situation possibly come about under circumstances in which different political arrangements prevail between Islam and the state? I hope that this question as well as the findings reported in this article will stimulate further debate and discussion on the relationship between the state and religious institutions in Muslim countries.

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